Design Resource

Lippan Artwork - Nagpur, Maharashtra

Mud Mirror Art

by
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth B.
NID, Bengaluru

Source:
https://www.dsource.in/resource/lippan-artwork-nagpur-maharashtra

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Introduction

Nagpur City is a place situated in the heart of India, precisely at the geographical center point of India and hence a zero mile monument is built here. The city declared the capital of Madhya Pradesh during the British Rule, is now accredited with the status of the second capital city of Maharashtra. It is also one of the smartest cities in the country, being an important commercial and political epicenter for the state. Having a literacy rate of 91.92 percent, the region accommodates a cosmopolitan population with people from different parts of the nation. Known also as Orange City, Nagpur is famous for its cultivation and large-scale trading. The city is one of the most recommended tourist attractions in the state, with a lot of interesting places to visit. Good quality cotton is produced in abundant quantities here because of its fertile soil and climate. Besides cotton textiles, silk and wool weaving were also practiced in the district. Hence textile was also once an important industry in the city. Traditional art and craft being an important aspect of Nagpur, the city is highly regarded for its preservation efforts. The royal house of the Bhonsales, as well as common people, patronized the tradition of painting in Nagpur. Lippan and Warli arts are the lauded creative marvels, which are commonly used to decorate the walls. These types of mud work crafts easily adapt to photo frames, mirrors, nameplates, etc. as they add an unconventional style to one's households or personal spaces.

Lippan Kam is a traditional mural art, made of clay. Though its origin is unclear, it is believed to be developed in the Kutch area of Gujarat, thus gradually paving its way into Maharashtra. Here the name Lippan Kam is derived from two words, Lippan meaning 'mud washing' and Kam meaning 'work' in Gujarati. This craft of mud and mirror work is purely handmade, against any kind of machine used for its manufacturing. These handicrafts beautifully curated to convey a story through design are highly durable, at the same time washable too. Traditionally Lippan was used to decorate interiors as well as exteriors of community-style houses called Bhungas, made of clay and bamboo chips. There was extensive use of dung for its binding property, but it was later replaced with clay or ceramic powder to avoid the smell of animal dung. The Lippan work was not just limited to decorations and designing but meant a lot for its utility. Once the rough sketch of the Lippan pattern was drawn, various sizes of geometrically shaped mirror tiles were glued abundantly on to the wall using thick starch. By this, the rooms were illuminated more even if only a single lamp is used to light up the home, owing to the reflected light from the glittering mirror-work. Completed art is all white, a shade from the marshland sand rich in salt content but nowadays as multicolour clay is available in the market, the artisans make colourful crafts. Lippan work is a beautiful representation of the flora and fauna of the state and also its cultural legacy. This unique art is practiced by artisan Mrs. Vaishali Kawre from Creative Craft Art Center, Nagpur for decades. Her team is a regular participant at art exhibitions across the country, aiming to build recognition for Lippan Work, therefore attract buyers.

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3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

House of the artisan Mrs.Vaishali Kawre.

Workshop where artisan practice and teach various arts to her students.

The nameplate of the artisan's workshop and other beautiful paintings hung on the wall.

Mrs. Vaishali Kawre, the owner cum trainer at the Creative Craft Center.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Semi-finished Lippan artwork kept aside for drying.

Mirror reflections from the ambient forming a rainbow-like colour reflection on the artwork.

The artisan is deeply involved in the making of an art-work.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Artisan explaining the making process of Lippan artwork.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw material required for Lippan artwork:

- **MDF (Medium-density Fiber) Board:** It is used as a base for the artwork.
- **A Ruler and Pencil:** These are used for measuring, drawing designs and straight lines.
- **Ceramic Powder:** It is the main ingredient in making the artwork.
- **DDL Binder (synthetic adhesive):** It is mixed along with the ceramic powder to make a soft dough.
- **Bowl:** It is used for mixing the substances.
- **Knife:** It is used for cutting the ceramic dough coils.
- **Zigzag Blade Knife:** It is used for cutting and shaping the ceramic dough.
- **White Acrylic Paint:** It is used for painting the surfaces of the artwork.
- **Brushes:** These are used for applying paints on the craft.
- **Geometrical Mirror Tiles:** Tiles are used as a decorative material.
- **Fabric Glue:** It is used as an adhesive to stick the mirror tiles on to the board.
- **Cloth:** It is used for wiping brushes and wet hands.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

MDF (Medium-Density Fiber) board.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Stationary materials are used for drawing designs onto the board.

Ceramic Powder.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Synthetic Adhesive.

A large bowl used for mixing ceramic powder and synthetic adhesive.

A knife used for trimming the excessive ceramic.

A knife used for shaping the ceramic dough.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

A white acrylic colour is used for painting the board.

Few brushes used for painting.

Clothes for wiping and cleaning the brushes.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Small mirror tiles.

Fabric Glue used to stick mirror tiles onto the wooden board surface.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Making Process

The process for making Lippan artwork begins with taking an MDF (medium-density fiber) board, of required dimensions. MDF is more stable than solid wood and extends a characteristic of withstanding heat and humidity. This is used as the base for the Lippan Work. Then desired designs are drawn on the board using a pen and a ruler. Once done, an appropriate ratio of Ceramic powder and the synthetic adhesive is taken into a large bowl, to be mixed to form a soft dough. Applying fabric glue or synthetic adhesive over the pencil sketch on the board, the artisan then spreads it correctly over the design drawn. Now small amounts of ceramic dough are rolled into thin coils with fingers, to be pasted over the design to create boundary lines at first. Extra care is taken to make sure that the dough coils do not crack while being applied to the design. For this, the artisan moisturizes their fingers with little water while dealing with the coil placement. When the basic framework is ready, the next is to fill in the line arts with the remaining dough. Once the sticking process is finished, the artwork is left for drying, usually for a day. After drying, white acrylic paint is applied as a base coat, followed by a second coat of any intended colour after 15 minutes gap. Now, at this stage, enough mirror tiles are kept ready to be attached to specific areas of the art, with respect to the design pattern. Then with the cleaning of the mirror with a wet cloth to remove any colour or glue stains, the making process of Lippan Artwork comes to an end. It is now ready to be hanged on a wall or framed as a showpiece in the houses.

The required size of the MDF board is placed over the work area.

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https://www.dsource.in/resource/lippan-artwork-nagpur-maharashtra/making-process

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

With the help of a pencil and a ruler, artisan drawing designs and patterns on the board.

Artisan pouring Ceramic powder into a large bowl.

Synthetic Adhesive being mixed with ceramic powder.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Artisan using hands to mix the elements until it becomes a soft dough.

Fabric Glue / Adhesive being applied onto the line-art of the design.

With the help of a brush, glue is spread on the design.

Artisan using hands to roll the dough into the required length of coils.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

The dough being pasted on to the line-art of the design.

Artisan using fingers to shape the dough into desired shapes.

The artwork kept aside 24 hours to dry.

After the art is dried, the surface is painted with white acrylic paint.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Left unattended to rest for 15 minutes, so that the applied paint gets dried properly.

Artisan using fabric glue to stick the mirror tiles over the surface of the board, concerning up to the design made.

A glimpse of the completed Lippan artwork.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Products

Lippan artworks often come in various sizes, designs, and shapes. The minimum size created by an artisan is 12 X 12 inches and the maximum size goes up to 12 X 12 Feet. Generally, the price of the products comes between INR 1,200 to INR 60,000, though it may differ as per the range of designs used. Shop sales cum participation at exhibitions helps them reach out to the customers directly without any for a middleman. Ms. Vaishali at Creative Craft also makes products like warli paintings, oil paintings, traditional paintings, murals, and folk paintings.

A rectangular Lippan artwork with peacock design.

A semi-finished Lippan artwork.

A Lippan artwork with vibrant colours.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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This documentation was done by Professor Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth B. at NID, Bengaluru.

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